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ISSUES IN US-CHINA SECURITY RELATIONS (U)

by

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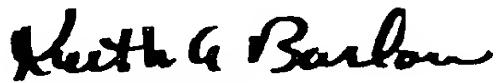
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FOREWORD (U)

(U) This special report reviews the major unresolved issues in US-China security relations and assesses their implications for both national security and the US Army. The genesis of the report was a working conference organized by the Strategic Studies Institute and held at the Army War College. The author discusses each of the problems identified by the conference participants and summarizes the arguments pro and con.

(U) In assessing the implications of these unresolved issues for both US policy and the Army specifically, the author concludes that the value of a carefully crafted security relationship outweighs any potential disadvantages. He recommends renewed attempts to expand military-to-military contacts despite current strains in US-China relations, and offers suggested guidelines for Army planners.

(U) This special report was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the Army War College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.



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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

LIEUTENANT COLONEL TODD R. STARBUCK has been assigned to the Strategic Studies Institute since 1980. He previously served in a variety of armor troop assignments in CONUS and Vietnam. Lieutenant Colonel Starbuck graduated from The Citadel, and earned master's degrees from the Army Command and General Staff College and the Naval Postgraduate School. A China foreign area officer, he has also studied at Nanyang University, Singapore.

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SUMMARY (U)

(U) US interests in improving relations with the People's Republic of China can be identified on three separate but interactive levels--global, regional and bilateral. However, thus far there has not been any firm consensus in the United States on the priorities to be accorded specific, frequently conflicting interests.

(U) The current US-China security relationship, although still essentially implicit in nature, is a key factor in the global strategic balance, as well as an important element in bilateral relations. Compounding the inherent difficulties in developing supportable, long-term public policy toward China are several significant, still largely unresolved issues affecting the security dimension of the relationship. Examples are the relative desirability of a "strong" China; approaches to addressing the capabilities gap in the Sino-Soviet military balance; China's value as a strategic counter-weight to the Soviet Union; the proper role of arms sales and technology transfer; and resolution of the Taiwan dilemma.

(U) A clearer understanding of these and related issues will enhance our ability to deal effectively with developing tensions in US-China relations, and improve possibilities for more productive security cooperation in the future. Meanwhile, there is a pressing need to take advantage of available opportunities to build a stronger foundation for the security relationship by expanding professional contacts on a military-to-military basis, and by responding to China's current modernization program in a positive manner.

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ISSUES IN US-CHINA SECURITY RELATIONS

Section I. Introduction. (ALL MATERIAL IN THIS SECTION IS UNCLASSIFIED.)

1. The possibilities presented by a security relationship between the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC) have intrigued US strategic planners since military ties were first proposed publicly in 1975, well over three years before normalization of diplomatic relations. Strategic considerations did play a key role in bringing about the initial rapprochement between the two countries after more than 20 years of mutual hostility, but the linkage remained implicit, rather than substantive, for some time.

2. The security relationship received a major boost in January 1980, when then-Secretary of Defense Harold Brown visited China in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. A flurry of activity was evident in the ensuing months, highlighted by a series of reciprocal visits by military delegations. In the past year, however, the relationship has languished, despite a brief revival during Secretary of State Haig's visit to Beijing in June 1981. Mutual concerns over the Taiwan question have been primarily responsible for inhibiting further development.

3. In order to gain a better understanding of the principal issues affecting the relationship, the Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College sponsored a workshop on the topic "Developments in US-China Security Relations." The workshop was held at Carlisle Barracks on 5 October 1981. Participants were drawn from several Department of Defense agencies, in particular the Army Staff, but included civilian specialists on US-China security affairs as well. A complete list of participants is provided in paragraph 7. The results of the workshop serve as the basis for the discussion of unresolved issues in Section II of this special report.

4. The workshop was divided into four separate sessions covering the following topics:

- a. US-China Relations and the Context of Security Cooperation

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- b. The Reagan Administration Approach to US-China Security Relations
- c. Taiwan and the US Policy Dilemma
- d. China and the United States in the 1980's: Institutionalized Entente or Strategic Partnership?

5. Following a brief, informal introduction by one of the participants, each session was then opened to wide-ranging discussion. Due to the limitations of time and the unconstrained nature of the exchanges, some important topics were mentioned only briefly. Nevertheless, the workshop succeeded in raising and addressing most of the key issues in US-China security relations. Policy recommendations were surprisingly diverse, indicating the absence of a broad, firm consensus on the pace and limits of security cooperation. Major points of discussion and contending viewpoints are summarized in the following section. Even when the participants did not reach a consensus, their insights and opinions can contribute to a better understanding and clearer definition of the major issues in US-China security relations.

6. The concluding section of this report assesses implications for both national security and for the US Army, and offers specific recommendations in conjunction with the latter. Some of these recommendations were suggested by the workshop discussions. Others have been made possible by recent developments in US-China relations, particularly the US decision to forego, for the time being, the sale of an improved fighter aircraft to Taiwan. Additional refinements were also made as a result of insights gained by the author during a trip to China and Northeast Asia in January 1982.

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7. PARTICIPANTS.

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Section II. Unresolved Issues in US-China Security Relations.

US Interests and Objectives.

8. A clear conception of one's national interests is usually considered a precondition for establishing foreign policy objectives. On the issues of US-China relations in general, and security cooperation in particular, there appears to be widespread awareness and acceptance of the main, underlying US interests. Consensus

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begins to break down, however, when it comes to assigning an operational priority to each of them. Specific objectives that are derived from unprioritized interests frequently conflict with one another. Indeed, when there is no general agreement on the relative importance of divergent interests, even discussing objectives can be frustrating and unproductive. The common tendency to confuse interests with objectives (and vice-versa) may be partly to blame for these conceptual difficulties, and in the case of US-China security relations the complexity of the issues is certainly a factor as well. Whatever the cause, the inability to establish a clear consensus on priorities constitutes a serious obstacle to the development of coherent, supportable public policy.

9. The principal interests of the United States in its security relationship with China can be assessed on three levels--global, regional and bilateral. While individual interests tend to be associated with a particular level, in reality each interest is operating simultaneously as part of a dynamic interrelationship of all three levels. In a global context, the principal US interest is in a balance of power. We specifically seek to prevent the political and economic domination of the Eurasian land mass by any power, or combination of powers, hostile to the United States. At present, US interests are served if the expansion of Soviet political and military power can be effectively contained. China shares this concern and brings to the relationship a unique blend of perceived power and concrete capabilities. Common antipathy toward the Soviet Union served as the basis for the initial Sino-American rapprochement, and has tended to drive the relationship since. For its part, the United States seeks to employ China as a long-term, perhaps permanent counterweight to the Soviet Union. China also claims, publicly at least, to be seeking a long-term strategic relationship with the United States for the same purpose.

10. Regionally in Asia, the United States desires a peaceful and stable

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environment, conducive to economic development and the creation of democratic political institutions in friendly, non-Communist countries. Preferably, this means permanent stability, allowing the United States to devote its attention to other important areas of the world where its interests are being more directly threatened. China's long-term aims, on the other hand, are less clear, but most observers agree that its goal is to reestablish itself as the preeminent power in Asia. Territorial expansion is unlikely, but an acknowledgment of China's enhanced status in the eyes of its neighbors will be actively sought. Obviously, long-term US interests in the region do not necessarily coincide with those of China, and this incompatibility will remain a potential source of serious disagreement.

11. On the bilateral level of the security relationship, the United States has an interest in the upgrading of Chinese military capabilities--primarily to enhance China's credibility as a strategic counterweight to the Soviet Union, but also as a natural corollary to planned modernization in all sectors. At the same time, the United States awaits China's military modernization with considerable uneasiness, anxiously hoping that a stronger, more self-confident China will choose to play a positive role in promoting peace and stability in the region.

12. Perhaps the most important bilateral security interest, however, is a friendly, or at least nonhostile, China. No longer is the world's most populous nation an implacable adversary of the United States. This transformation represents a substantial strategic gain for the United States and its allies, particularly as China's modest strategic nuclear capabilities continue to improve. To a large extent, China's future military capabilities will be predetermined by its relative success in modernizing a backward economy. Whatever the outcome of this long-term effort, a carefully crafted security relationship would be one element supporting US interests in easing the impact, on all parties concerned, should China gradually emerge as a global power. We clearly have an interest in encouraging China to play

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a positive, responsible role in world affairs. Friendly, or at least nonthreatening, relations with the United States and the West promote this goal--in fact, they seem to be virtually a prerequisite. Should China fall short of achieving the status of a first-rank power, nothing is lost. In the meantime, a positive attitude on our part toward China's modernization is a prudent and inexpensive investment in future stability, and encourages peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue as well.

13. In summary, the value of some level of security cooperation with China is not seriously questioned. The actions of successive US administrations have conclusively settled the question of whether or not there will be a security relationship. In order to maximize our benefit from it, we need to identify and focus our efforts on those areas where our security interests overlap with China's.

A "Strong" vs. a "Weak" China.

14. The lack of consensus on US interests noted earlier is amply illustrated by (and can perhaps be partly traced to) disagreement on whether it is in the security interests of the United States for China to be "strong" or "weak." Dealing with such gross generalizations is clearly troublesome, but seems unavoidable. On one hand, a persuasive case can be made that it simply does not make good sense for the United States and the West to contribute to China's military modernization, since no one can be sure what the Chinese will do with their improved capabilities. On the other hand, many argue that a "weak" China has little value to the West as a strategic counterweight to the Soviet Union. They fear that a weak China could be easily blackmailed into neutrality in the event of a global war between the United States and the Soviet Union.

15. Faced with choosing either a "weak" China or a "strong" China, there is little support for weakness, but also few convincing arguments in favor of unlimited strength. Standing somewhere in the middle, most observers view a weak and divided China as inherently unstable and highly vulnerable to Soviet coercion. They would

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also view with concern a strong, united China, on the march in Asia and perhaps elsewhere. Moderate strength, sufficient to maintain internal cohesion and resist Soviet threats, appears to support US interests; contributing to the creation of a new "colossus in the East" clearly does not.

Gaps in Capabilities.

16. In an operational context, the strong versus weak argument is closely related to perceived gaps in capabilities between China and the Soviet Union. Everyone agrees that a serious gap currently exists in military capabilities. What is surprising is the range of prescriptive policy recommendations which are offered.

For example:

- a. We should help the Chinese close the existing gap.
- b. We should help the Chinese narrow the existing gap.
- c. We should help the Chinese to avoid falling any further behind.

The political and economic implications for the United States of one course of action over another are both obvious and staggering. There are several possible explanations for the diversity of opinion: a failure to appreciate the limits to our capacity to influence existing imbalances; careless use of imprecise terms; or simply paying insufficient attention to this important issue. It may also indicate that abstract theorizing has outpaced our interest in developing empirical evidence to support our assertions. In any event, a realistic assessment of the respective capabilities (current and potential) of China and the United States, correlated to the threat posed by the Soviet Union, would contribute to a better understanding of how the gap in capabilities should be approached. We also need to better understand how a change in the Sino-Soviet military balance will affect political relationships and the prospects for achieving our political objectives.

China as a Strategic Counterweight

- 17. One important issue which does enjoy some degree of consensus is the

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relative value of China as a strategic counterweight to the Soviet Union, at least given current capabilities. The Soviets are seriously concerned about fighting a two-front war. They appear to believe that this is a real possibility and are preparing accordingly. There is also some evidence the Soviets may be afraid that at present they could not win such a war. Security cooperation between China and the United States should heighten the perception that one might, in fact, come to the aid of the other. At the same time, conflict scenarios can be developed wherein the United States would be very unlikely to aid China in any meaningful way, and vice-versa. Even when interests did closely coincide, there is some doubt the United States could provide meaningful support to China in a conflict with the Soviet Union and still fight a full-scale war in Europe.

18. Despite the wartime operational possibilities offered by a security relationship with China, there is also fairly widespread agreement that at this point the additional strategic leverage to be gained by playing the "China card" is minimal. The 1978 visit to China by Zbigniew Brzezinski, prior to normalization of relations, is frequently cited as the point at which the Soviets became convinced that a US-China strategic alignment would become a reality. They have been planning on that assumption ever since and, as a result, the June 1981 visit to China by Secretary of State Haig was viewed as inevitable. Even his announcement of a less restrictive arms sales policy was not unexpected.

19. On a final point, most analysts who monitor Sino-Soviet relations consider the possibility of meaningful rapprochement between the two Communist giants as remote. While this assessment is probably correct, they may be asking the wrong question. Assuming full rapprochement is clearly not possible, the question the United States should try to answer is just how much Sino-Soviet reconciliation (or detente) can the US-China strategic alignment absorb before losing its credibility? This is the yardstick against which policy proposals should be judged, and either

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accepted or rejected. At the same time, China's relations with the Soviet Union (and foreign policy generally) have always been heavily influenced by the ebb and flow of the domestic political situation, contests beyond the control of outsiders and often only dimly perceived by them. The present regime enjoys no guarantee on how long it will remain in power, and a successor leadership might perceive advantages in reducing Sino-Soviet tension. While these inherent uncertainties should be recognized, and may affect the substance of future cooperation, they should not be used as a justification for failing to develop security relations.

Chinese Interests and Objectives

20. If the interests of the United States and their relative priorities are contentious issues in our own counsels, the interests and objectives of China appear refreshingly obvious. No doubt the Chinese view the American situation in a similar fashion. China's fundamental interests either lie in internal development, preservation of sovereignty and territorial integrity, and security from external threat, or derive from psycho-political imperatives related to China's perceived position in the world. Specific objectives relevant to the security relationship include the following:

- a. establish and maintain a balance of power
- b. achieve economic modernization
- c. participate fully in the affairs of the modern world
- d. achieve reunification of Taiwan with the mainland (China believes, correctly or otherwise, that "the path to Taiwan leads through Washington.")
- e. maintain regional stability (while China's own strength gradually increases)
- f. use the United States as a temporary counterbalance to the Soviet Union (again, pending increased Chinese strength).

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21. In the long term, China's international objectives focus on eventual "restoration" to its position of historical preeminence. China aspires to be the major power in Asia, and here, perhaps more than anywhere else, Chinese and American interests are likely to conflict in the coming years.

Declaratory US Policy on Security Cooperation

22. The US-China security relationship has been developing rapidly, especially since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and Secretary Haig's June 1981 trip opened still another chapter. His visit had several objectives:

- a. to begin treating China as we would any other "friendly, non-allied country";
- b. to demonstrate that the United States would be forthcoming under the stated policy of permitting the transfer of dual-use technology;
- c. to terminate a number of old laws discriminating against the People's Republic;
- d. to remove China from the list of embargoed countries;
- e. to eliminate perceptions of "thresholds" of security cooperation by declaring that the United States would henceforth consider Chinese requests for arms and military equipment on "a case-by-case basis," without any *a priori* restrictions.

23. Current US policy recognizes the impact of the security relationship on the domestic situation in China by supporting broad economic modernization, and by strengthening those elements or factions within the Chinese leadership which perceive strategic advantages in closer relations with the United States.

24. The United States also seeks to check Soviet adventurism by linking the bilateral US-China relationship to demonstrated Soviet behavior. At the same time, the United States does not intend to gratuitously provoke the Soviet Union by engaging in extensive, unwarranted arms transfers to China.

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25. The overall intent of recent initiatives has been to demonstrate to the Chinese that there is substance to the US policy of strategic alignment with China. There are some severe economic problems which will constrain the development of the arms transfer option for some time, but even were this not the case, the United States would be proceeding at a measured pace.

Distinguishing "Security Cooperation" from "Arms Transfers"

26. Whenever the security dimension of US-China relations is discussed, there is an unfortunate tendency to use the terms "security cooperation" and "arms sales" interchangeably. Security cooperation encompasses a far wider range of potential interaction than simply the transfer of weapons and defense technology. Cooperation in the areas of intelligence, communications, planning, training, and exercises is possible, as is general technical assistance in a variety of fields. Cooperation of this sort offers opportunities for increased contacts with People's Liberation Army (PLA) elites. Moreover, these important interest elites are widely considered to have benefitted the least, so far, from the improvement of US-China relations over the past several years. Emphasizing interaction in these (for want of a better term) "software" areas can pay substantial dividends, while reducing the risks inherent in arms transfers ("hardware").

27. A supporting argument is that historically the record of the United States in attempting to achieve political objectives by manipulating arms sales has not been a good one. We have overestimated our ability to control the situation, or created serious side-effects which outweighed any potential advantages we might have expected to gain. Also, building up unrealistic expectations in a partner can be dangerous, since sales of US weapons are subject to stringent bureaucratic and congressional restrictions. Abrupt termination of an established arms supplier-recipient relationship usually has a serious impact on the overall tenor of bilateral relations.

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Offensive vs. Defensive Weapons

28. Discussions of arms sales inevitably turn to distinctions between offensive and defensive weapons, and the utility of somehow incorporating these perceived differences into the arms transfer process. A spirited debate usually follows, with one side arguing that such distinctions are artificial, because they tend to break down rapidly in real situations. The opposing view is that the differences are real and can be manipulated effectively.

29. While there is considerable evidence to support the first contention, some categories of weapons are clearly more defensive in nature than others. Hand-held antitank weapons can be effectively employed in offensive operations, but certainly do not have the offensive capabilities of a tank (the ideal antitank weapon), or a vehicle-mounted antitank missile. Antiaircraft weapons can be used to cover attacking, as well as defending, forces, but the characteristics of individual weapon systems vary greatly, either reducing or enhancing their effectiveness when employed in an offensive role. Interceptor aircraft do not possess the same offensive potential as deep penetration attack planes--and the list goes on.

30. The offensive-defensive dichotomy is a real one, but it is relative, depending upon the characteristics of the specific systems being compared. This may seriously limit its usefulness as a discriminating factor in some arms transfer decisions, but should not disqualify it completely. Given the low technological level of Chinese military forces and the nature of the threat they face, the potential for improved security through the acquisition of relatively unsophisticated, "purely defensive" weapons is substantial.

Taiwan and the US Policy Dilemma

31. Virtually without exception, informed observers see US-China relations entering a critical stage. During the normalization process, China and the United States "agreed to disagree" on certain sensitive bilateral issues, mostly associated

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with Taiwan. The subsequent passage of the Taiwan Relations Act, several months after mutual recognition, further complicated matters. As these unresolved issues began to float to the surface during 1981, the foundation of the US-China relationship showed signs of cracking. A decision on a pending request from Taiwan for advanced fighter aircraft, inherited by the Reagan Administration, quickly emerged as the most critical point of contention.

32. Given the administration's professed intention to continue, and perhaps even increase, arms sales to Taiwan, anticipation and concern began to build on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Taipei perceived a rare opportunity to reverse the long-term deterioration of official US-Taiwan ties, a trend which had been accelerating since early in the Carter Administration.

33. The leadership in Beijing, recognizing the same possibility and sensitive to intensifying domestic political pressures, went to great lengths to protect its stake in the strategic alignment with the United States. A remarkable series of conciliatory offers to Taiwan alternated with blunt warnings to the United States of the dire (if unspecified) consequences for US-China relations if new sales were authorized. The security relationship was specifically identified as one area which would receive an immediate setback; a PLA military acquisition delegation scheduled to visit the United States in September 1981 was postponed indefinitely.

34. The suspense was ended, at least temporarily, on 11 January 1982, when the United States announced that it would not sell advanced (or even improved) fighter aircraft to Taiwan, but would extend the existing F-5E coproduction line. Chinese protests to the decision have been loud and predictable, but so far have not included serious retaliatory sanctions. It is still too early to render an unequivocal judgment, but US-China relations appear to have successfully weathered their most serious crisis since normalization. The long-term outlook, however, is far from promising.

35. Viewed objectively, the furor over the sale of an advanced fighter to

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Taiwan is only one manifestation of the deeper, underlying policy dilemma facing the United States--whether to take a substantive position on the question of reunification or attempt to remain above the fray. If the Chinese "accept" the January decision, the immediate crisis will have passed, but the United States will still find itself placed uncomfortably in the middle of this volatile and enduring problem.

36. Taiwan's reunification with the mainland ranks near the top of the "great patriotic tasks" assigned to the present Communist leadership, and is ultimately bound up with notions of national sovereignty and regime legitimacy. The Chinese on the mainland consistently maintain that any military sales to Taiwan undermine their attempts toward peaceful reunification by removing any incentive for serious negotiation on the part of the Taiwan authorities. The Taipei leadership, meanwhile, is experiencing serious difficulties of its own in sustaining the legitimacy of the Kuomintang regime in the face of internal social and political pressures (especially from the native Taiwanese majority), and widespread anxiety over the island's future.

37. The declared US policy on the fundamental issue has been neither to encourage nor discourage reunification. This policy reflects the prudent view that US interests are better served by doing nothing overt at this time. Because we are not being pressed to take an immediate, definitive position, we should leave the problem on the back burner for awhile and let it simmer. To stir it up now could easily create serious, unnecessary complications. An opposing view argues that the present situation offers the United States a unique opportunity to influence the reunification issue if it assumes an active and positive role in PRC-Taiwan reconciliation. Proponents of this approach feel that present US policy fails to consider the potential impact of dramatic developments which we could not control. An example offered is the sudden death of Taiwan's President Chiang Ching-kuo, followed by popular unrest, political turmoil and resurgent Taiwanese nationalism, perhaps leading

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to a declaration of independence from China and an international crisis of the first magnitude.

38. A role for the United States in the reunification process will likely remain a highly speculative possibility for some time. Meanwhile, the problem of adequate security for Taiwan is receiving close attention in the United States. As reflected in the recent F-5E decision, a substantial body of informed opinion tends to minimize the threat to Taiwan's security, at least through the near term. Taiwan wants access to advanced US weapons, it is argued, primarily to reaffirm the symbolic commitment to its interests that such purchases would convey. Since PRC military capabilities are insufficient to threaten Taiwan now, and probably for the next five to 10 years, there is no military justification for sale of an improved fighter at this time.

39. The foregoing discussion of the Taiwan issue has disclosed some areas of substantial agreement, but again there is considerable diversity of opinion on many key points. Recent policy decisions may well serve as the basis for a new consensus, and seeking mutually acceptable answers to the following three questions would contribute to a clearer, more useful debate in the interim.

- a. What are Taiwan's legitimate defense requirements?
- b. What level of arms can the United States continue to provide to Taiwan without damaging the prospects for improved security relations with China?
- c. What role, if any, should the United States play in attempts to achieve the peaceful reunification of Taiwan with the mainland?

Section III. Conclusions (U).

Implications for US National Security (U).

40. (U) February 1982 marked the 10th anniversary of President Richard Nixon's historic trip to China. The intervening decade has been an eventful one, both for the United States and for China. Each has weathered domestic trauma with

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a fair measure of success, and is now rebounding from previous setbacks with a renewed sense of self-confidence and determination. Internationally, the perception of a common threat to their respective interests has brought the two nations together closer and more quickly than anyone had anticipated, particularly in the area of implicit strategic cooperation. While remarkable strides have been made in recent years in improving mutual understanding and setting aside old animosities, much remains to be accomplished.

41. (U) The prospects for improved bilateral relations are encouraging, provided some potential obstacles can be reduced or avoided. Strengthened bilateral relations in all areas--economic, political, social and cultural--are essential if the security relationship is to flourish, or indeed even survive. It is easily the most sensitive aspect of US-China relations, and one which must be developed patiently and carefully. Our understanding of the complexities and potential pitfalls improves daily, but there is still a need for more widespread consensus on the key issues identified earlier.

42. (U) Agreement on US interests is paramount if the United States is to develop consistent, supportable public policy. As a first step, these interests should be clearly stated and then systematically addressed as national strategy is developed. Assigning relative priorities to them might well be unnecessary, if one could only be assured that *all* significant interests were at least being considered during the policymaking process. Summarizing from an earlier section, major US security interests with respect to China are outlined below:

A global balance of power

The containment of Soviet global and regional expansionism

Domestic political stability and gradual economic modernization in the PRC

A friendly, or at least nonhostile PRC

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Peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue

Free market economic growth and democratic political development in Asia and the Pacific

43. (U) In general, we also need to analyze more carefully the long-range implications of our policies, at least to the extent such a difficult task is possible. For example, one objective in developing China as a strategic counter-weight to the Soviet Union is to complicate Soviet military planning and force them to face the possibility of a two-front war. Surveying the growth of Soviet military capabilities in Asia over the past decade, one can surmise that this objective has already been largely realized--perhaps too well. While it is prudent and proper to express alarm over the steady increase in Soviet military power in Northeast Asia, we should recognize that a significant factor in the Soviet decision to sustain this buildup was the realization that they might indeed be forced to fight a two-front war, if they expected to protect their Siberian resources and retain population centers and military facilities in the Soviet Far East. Exaggerated fears of the "Chinese menace" and a compulsion to engage in superpower competition were (and are) important factors as well. Nevertheless, the unanticipated consequences of action-reaction responses frequently complicate our strategic calculus.

Implications for the Army (U)

44. (U) The US Army has played a major role thus far in the development of US-China security relations. China has traditionally been a continental power, and will likely remain one at least through the end of this century. Chinese security concerns have focused on the defense of land borders against external threat (most recently the Soviet Union), hence their preoccupation with ground forces. The PLA ground forces, which have in the past played key political and social roles as well, dominate the Chinese defense establishment. The US Army is the professional counterpart of the PLA ground forces, and thus enjoys an advantage in developing military-to-military contacts.

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46. (U) Aside from the problem of Taiwan policy, which has been somewhat meliorated but is unlikely to be conclusively resolved for some time, Army planners should understand that the creation of a meaningful security relationship with China will require time and patience on the part of all concerned.¹ Future progress will be subject to a number of constraints. For the United States, the international situation generally and the state of relations with the Soviet Union will be important factors. Public opinion and domestic political opposition, from several quarters, may limit the options available to policymakers. Finally, the perceptions of regional friends and allies, and their possible objections to expanded cooperation, must be considered as well.

47. (U) Recognition of the aforementioned constraints should not discourage efforts to develop a more meaningful security relationship with China. On the contrary, intensified efforts are needed. Beyond the general perception of a strategic alignment of the United States and China, and the cordiality of preliminary high level military-to-military contacts, there is little real substance to the relationship at present. Because the security dimension has remained essentially hostage to an unfavorable political environment for over a year, it has failed to

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keep pace with progress in other areas. Sino-American economic, commercial and cultural relations are surprisingly well-developed, and this interaction is evident down to the school and factory level in China's urban areas.

49. (U) Our efforts to establish and strengthen a security relationship with China would be enhanced by better understanding of the scope and nature of the unresolved issues identified earlier. Drawing from the discussion of these issues, several broad recommendations for Army planners are offered below.

a. (U) Seek ways to decouple US-China relations generally, and the security relationship specifically, from US-Soviet relations. There is a clear and vital connection which cannot, and should not, be ignored. But relations with China should be allowed to develop more on their own considerable merits, and depend less on the vicissitudes of Soviet international behavior.

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c. (U) Recognize that US and Chinese interests do not always coincide, and may seriously clash in some instances. We should establish our security relationship on a firm foundation of common threat perception, interest in reducing the possibility of war, and realistic expectations of mutual benefits accruing from such a relationship.

d. (U) Emphasize the "software" options in developing and strengthening security relations. We should encourage a broad range of interaction and cooperation in nonsensitive, nonprovocative areas, while shifting the spotlight away from arms sales.

50. (U) In developing a broad policy for US-China security relations, a wide range of specific actions can be taken which will support mutual security interests in positive, yet prudent ways. These have already been collected and evaluated in several JCS and Army Staff documents, and are far too numerous to list here. Specific actions include training and education, intelligence exchange, technical assistance, port visits and personnel exchange programs. All offer opportunities for expanded military-to-military contacts and would contribute to a durable, more effective security relationship. Implementation of these measures has not progressed due to serious policy differences. However, the Army should be prepared to press for new initiatives if bilateral relations begin to improve in the wake of the Taiwan arms sale decision.

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52. (U) In conclusion, the progress made in US-China relations over the past decade has been truly remarkable. Overt hostility has been transformed into tentative friendship. While serious obstacles still exist, and can only be entirely eliminated over a period of years, it is clear that the United States has a vital interest in building better relations with China. In domestic affairs, in foreign policy, and even to a degree in ideology, the People's Republic has embarked upon a course of development far more compatible with Western values, norms and interests than had previously been the case. If the promise that China's modernization holds for future US-China relations is to be realized, then the United States must respond in a positive manner. The gains of the past and the opportunities of the future are too important to be ignored.

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